Keep Your Food Safe

FDA U.S. Food and Drug Administration

The Food and Drug Administration, or FDA, is a United States government agency. FDA helps protect the health of consumers by teaching them about food safety.

Keep Your Food Safe

Food that goes bad can make you sick. This is called food poisoning, or foodborne illness.

Sometimes when people think they have the "flu" or a "stomach bug," they really have a foodborne illness.

You can keep food safe. This booklet tells you how to:

■ buy safe food

   and

■ keep it safe at home.

What makes foods go bad? Germs. They get on foods and grow. You cannot see germs on food. You cannot always smell or taste them, either.

These are some of the foods germs like best:

- Milk and other dairy products

- Eggs

- Meat

- Poultry

- Seafood

- Fruits and vegetables

Foods that are likely to have germs that can make you sick include:

- Unpasteurized or untreated juices, such as apple cider

- Sprouts

- Raw eggs and foods that contain raw eggs, such as cookie dough and Caesar salad dressing
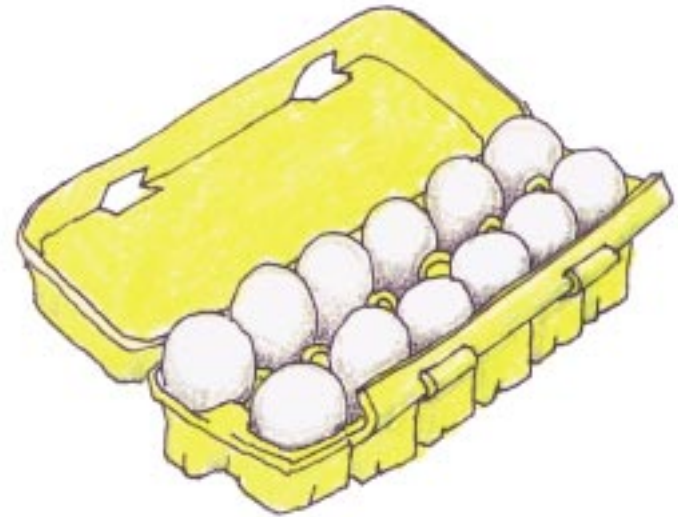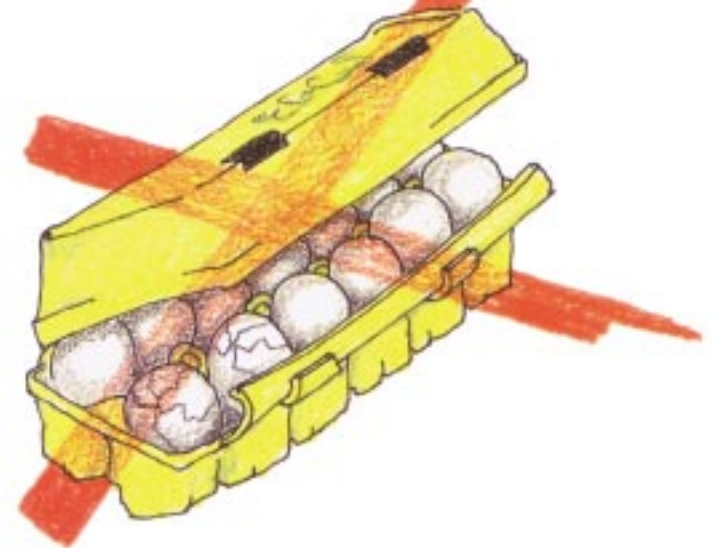
Safe Food

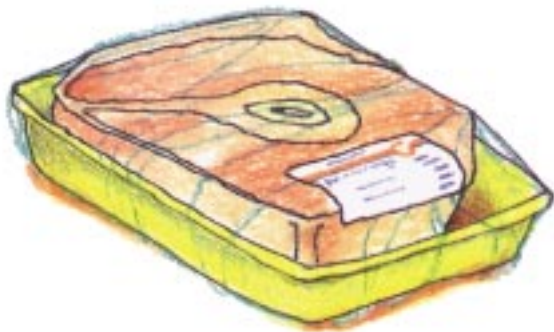Buy cans and jars that look perfect.

Do the cans have dents? Are the jars cracked? Do they have lids that are not closed tight? The food may have germs that can make you sick.

Check eggs, too. Open the carton and see if any eggs are broken or cracked.
Only buy eggs that are refrigerated in the store.

Raw meat, poultry, and seafood sometimes drip. The juices that drip may have germs.

Keep these juices away from other foods. Put raw meat, poultry, and seafood into plastic bags before they go into your cart.

Pick up milk and other cold foods last. This will give them less time to warm up before you get home.

Save hot chicken and other hot foods for last, too. This will give them less time to cool off before you get home.
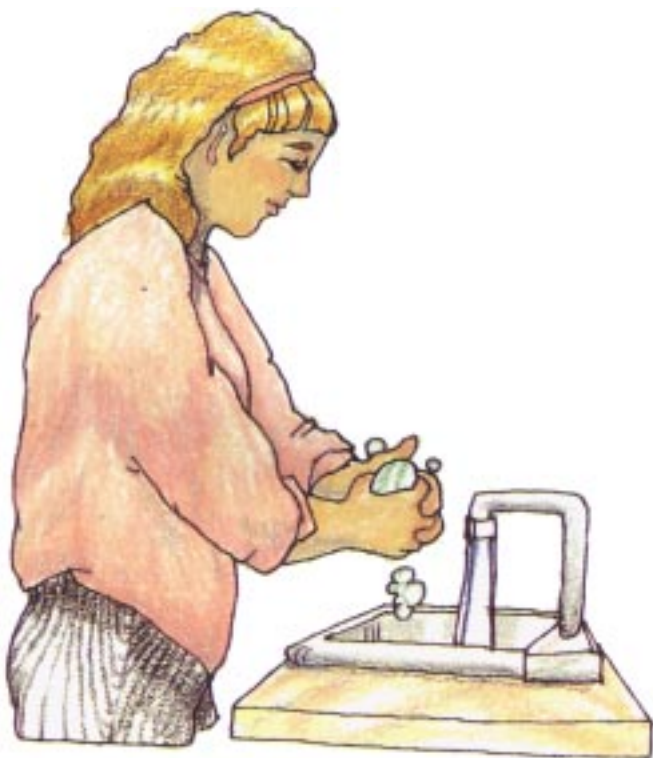
Safe Food

At Home

After shopping, get home as soon as you can. Then put food into the refrigerator or freezer right away. Eggs always go in the refrigerator, but NOT in the door of the refrigerator.
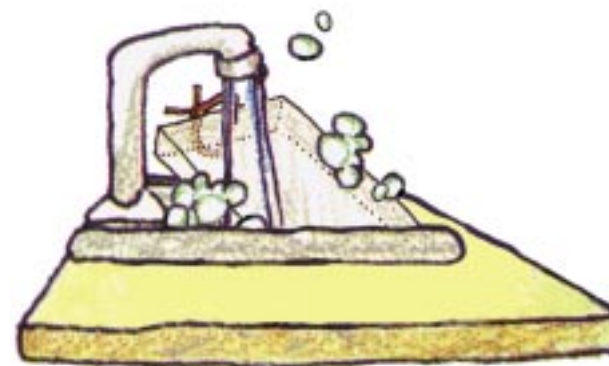
Make sure that you and your kitchen are clean.

Always wash your hands for at least 20 seconds before and after you touch food. Use warm water and soap.

Wash everything else before and after it touches food.
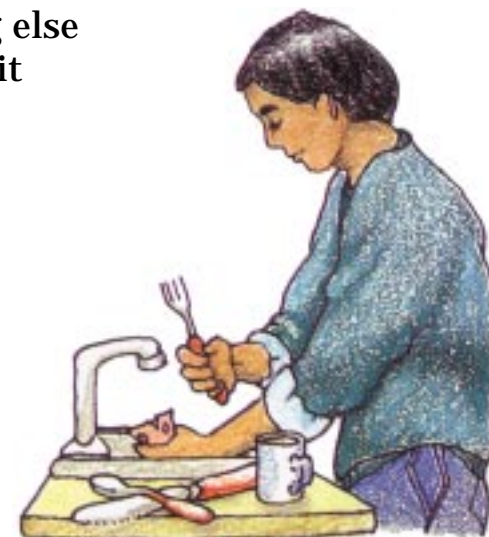
Wash your cutting board with hot soapy water before you go on to the next food.

For extra protection, you can clean the board with a kitchen sanitizer, such as a solution of one teaspoon chlorine bleach to one quart water. When the cutting board becomes worn or hard to clean, throw it out and get a new one.

Raw meat, raw poultry, raw seafood and raw eggs can spread germs in your kitchen. Keep these foods and their juices away from other foods. If you use cutting boards, it's best to set one aside that is used only for raw meat, poultry, fish and eggs.

Fresh fruits and vegetables also need to be clean. Rinse them under warm running water to wash dirt away. Use a produce brush when appropriate.

Did you wipe up the juices with a dish towel? Wash it before you use it again.
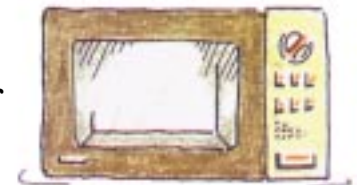
Or, use paper towels and throw them away.

Meat, poultry and seafood need to stay cold while they thaw.

Thaw them:

■ In the refrigerator. Do it one or two days before you will cook the food.

or

■ In the microwave. Use the "defrost" setting. Then cook the food right away.

Raw meat, raw poultry, raw seafood, and raw eggs can make you sick. Cook them until they are done.

■ Use a meat thermo-meter for poultry and meat, if possible.

■ Use a meat thermo-meter if possible when cooking hamburger. Cook hamburger to a temperature of 160 degees F. If you don't have a meat thermometer, don't eat hamburger if the meat is still pink.

   ■ Dig a fork into cooked fish. The fish should flake.

■ Cooked egg whites and yolks are firm, not runny.

If the food is left out for two or more hours, germs can grow.

So, put leftovers in the refrigerator or freezer as soon as you finish eating. Put them in shallow dishes so they cool faster.

Did you put leftovers in the refrigerator? Eat them in the next few days, before they go bad.

Keep Your Food Safe

It is hard to tell if a food is safe.

Foods that go bad may look, smell, and taste like safe foods.

So be safe.

- Buy safe food.

- Keep food safe at home.

If you think a food might be bad, **do not taste it**.

Remember this: When in doubt, throw it out!

Do you have questions about food safety? The FDA (Food and Drug Administration) may have an office near you. Look for their number in the blue pages of the phone book or call 1-888-SAFEFOOD (1-888-723-3366).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) can also answer your food safety questions. You can call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-800-535-4555.

You can also contact FDA through its toll-free number, 1-888-INFO-FDA (1-888-463-6332). Or, on the World Wide Web at *www.fda.gov.*